DEFENCE OF GEISHA GIRLS

More Capable Than Wives as Entertainers—Equal to Actresses and Dancers of Occident

By PRINCESS OONA NAZZITO.

THE charms of the Japanese geisha have been so often sung by ardent admirers, and as often depreciated by those who misunderstand her position and character, that we make no apology for one further attempt to treat the subject frankly and from a Japanese point of view. The geisha arose naturally out of the peculiar conditions of Japanese civilization. In a country where Confucianism so restricted women that it was not considered proper for them to appear at gay or public functions as the companions of men the need of the eternal feminine was nevertheless felt, as a waitress, if for no other reason; and if a waitress was necessary, why should she not be a woman of grace and accomplishments? Moreover, the house of the average Japanese gentleman was on too small a scale to become a convenient place for comfortably banqueting in, so that the host usually had to take his guests to a restaurant, where the company was naturally waited on by the maids of the establishment. The Japanese code of manners, especially the etiquette of feasting, is punctilious to a detail, and few wives were capable of properly conducting the ceremony of a banquet, even were they permitted to do so. But the women of the middle and upper classes never appeared at feasts. Their place was in the home with their children. The idea of their sitting down with a company of their husbands' guests and singing or dancing for their entertainment would be preposterous from a Japanese point of view. And as for the idea of having one's wife dance a polka with a guest of the male persuasion, it would be intolerably immodest to the Japanese mind.

The Japanese, however, are content with less diverting amusements. They do not care to dance themselves; they prefer to have others do it for them. Men and women do not dance in real Japanese society. All dancing is by women, and the geisha is the ideal exponent of the art. This is surely a more highly moral conception of the art than that which cannot conceive of a dance without men and women bouncing about the room in each other's arms.

The dancing of the geisha is an art of a high order; and no one who has witnessed it can regard it as otherwise than a harmless if not æsthetic form of entertainment. Then the geisha combines with her capacity for entertainment the further essential of waitress. As a waitress she is perfection. Thus she is a person of numerous accomplishments. She can dance, sing, play the samisen, chat, tell stories, and smooth the way for social conversation in a manner that gives a Japanese feast its most enduring charm.

This is, of course, in marked contrast to Occidental custom. There the wife is the hostess and a dandy in swallowtails is the waiter. The wife chats with her husband's or her own guests much in the way the geisha does in Japan. After dinner the wife sings, plays on the piano or enters into games for the entertainment of the guests. She even concedes the privilege of being taken for a turn over the waxed floor by a male guest met only that evening for the first time. When if the company want theatricals they must retire to the public theatre or concert hall after dinner. It will, therefore, be readily seen that an institution like the geisha, which combines all these essentials of hospitality in one, would easily find a place in a society where the mother and wife were held in sacred seclusion.

The Japanese geisha is, then, a professional waitress and entertainer. She is the outcome of that advanced state of society which marks a careful division of labor. She is a professional and really artistic medium of social intercourse. Without her Japanese gatherings would lose much of their vivacity and pleasing abandon. Endowed as the geisha is with more than the ordinary share of personal attractions, elegant and accomplished in all the arts of society, she is popular among all classes, though not unnaturally she is a source of anxiety to elders and of temptation to youth. If she falls it is the fault of the men who should protect her, and her imperfections are not greater or more glaring than those of the actress and other professional entertainers of the West.

Just as in Europe and America the actress and the music hall singer or dancer are given a lighter name than they really deserve, so has the geisha suffered in Japan. But her character depends upon herself and her companions, just as the character of other women does. True, she is more exposed than other women in Japan; that is because the mothers of the nation must be protected from public gossip and dangerous associations; but the geisha is not more exposed than the women of Europe who attend balls and other gayeties of the season. The men whom the geisha meets are not less desirable than many who dance with the wives and daughters of the West during an evening's hop.

Of course, we know that there are various grades of society in the West and that some of the evening parties given by parents are quite proper and select; but not all are so, men of all sorts being admitted to balls an' places where dancing goes on.

In Japan the geisha is a universal institution. There is not the smallest town in the most remote corner of the empire but has its geisha. But those of the larger cities, such as Kioto, Tokio, Osaka, Nagoya, Niigata and Nagasaki, have their unique distinctions of which the several places are wont to boast. The girls of Kioto are looked upon as the most artistically dressed in Japan. Their appearance is somewhat heavy and their trains bulky, but for elegance and grace, as well as comeliness in dress, they cannot be excelled.

The Osaka geisha, on the other hand, are noted for simplicity of their costumes, but a simplicity not inconsistent with beauty and high art.

The Tokio geisha are regarded as the most representative in the empire. The people of the capital look upon them as possessed of a temper and disposition not unlike the spirit of the old Samurai. It is a disposition proud and independent of the influence that comes from position and wealth. Their attitude and condescension are the same whether the guest be a common merchant or a prince, a man of moderate means or a millionaire. In every act they try to do their best, whether the guests be high or low, rich or poor. And in respect to their accomplishments the Tokio geisha are held to be far superior to those of the provinces and outside cities. They have, as a rule, no such charms of complexion, as some of the Kioto and Nagoya geisha, but the Tokio patrons think them quite beautiful enough for human mortals.

The geisha does not attain unto her superior accomplishments naturally or by accident. She has to undergo a lifelong course of training. If a man intends his daughter to become a geisha, he must send her to the geisha schools as early as seven years of age. There she must remain until womanhood, undergoing daily practice in singing, dancing and music. She learns to become a sort of opera singer; for she must be able to tell an interesting episode or a thrilling tale in song or dance, to the strains of the samisen, often being her own accompanist. After she enters upon her career it is very difficult to quit, unless by good fortune some wealthy lover marries her, which not infrequently happens. The wives of some quite prominent persons in Japan were once geishas.

On the whole their lives are not happy, for no woman can be happy without a home. Though they are now looked upon with pride as an institution peculiar to Japan, the time may come when the influx of European civilization will displace them by wives and daughters, and then real anxieties will begin.

A Typical Geisha.

UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD

Geisha Waitress.

OLD FRENCH MARKET TO GO

One of the Most Interesting Landmarks of New Orleans Is to Be Completely Changed

NEW ORLEANS, Aug. 24.—Awakening after years of peaceful somnolence New Orleans has gradually done away with landmark after landmark in the last decade and now presents an appearance very different from the picturesque and dirty old city which strangers in former days admired as they complained of the odors which rose from cobblestone pavements and gutters.

Gone are those gutters now, replaced with an expensive sewer and drainage system; gone also are the glories of the old St. Louis Hotel, vanished is the lagniappe which used to go with every purchase and no longer may a lusty lunged scion of the French quarter enter the corner grocery and say "M'sieu Bates, Maniw she say I'me have quartee wirth 'v sugar 'n' quartee wirth uv buttair 'n' a yunion for lagniappe."

Gone with these glories also is the picturesque Cabildo, in which these governments had executive offices during Louisiana's history. They have painted it and gilded it and plastered it until the old Cabildo looks now for all the world like a branch of the public library.

St. Roch's Cemetery has also been renovated. The old chapel houses have been moved and those little prayer places where the solitary worshipper in the past knelt under the canopy of the blue sky have been so changed and modernized as to be scarcely recognizable.

And now to the amazement and the horror and the indignation of those whose fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers dealt there, the city has decreed that the old French market shall be practically rebuilt. So there is sorrow down in the old French quarter and old Marie, who has sold rich cream cheese in the market for the last fifty years, raises her hands in the general direction of heaven with the air of one who might forewarn of calamity but mercifully forbears.

Near the docks where the muddy Mississippi washes down its silt the French market has stood for many years. No man is there who might estimate the number of rounds of beef which have been purchased beneath its red shed, no man may reckon the fish which have gone from the stall none can say how many housewives have made thrifty trips to the old market, but the ruts in the street where the wagon wheels have passed and the worn places in the sidewalks, marks of thousands of feet, go to show the market's age.

The market's age might entitle it to respect, but New Orleans has awakened and now the market will be made all over again, very new and very shiny. White tile stalls are to replace the hacked wooden shelves where meat cleavers have scored gash after gash. Electric lights are to take the place of the gas burners which flared so picturesquely over the heads of the crowds that thronged the place morning after morning, crowds of men, women and children, speaking seemingly dozens of languages.

The floor of the market, now stone, is to be taken up and in its place white tiled work is to be installed. The market is to be screened with copper wire and the old pillars which have suported the red roof will be replaced with near marble affairs.

And old Marie and her neighbors are sad, sad, sad.

"Eh bien," said Marie, as she shrugged her shoulders and passed the neat bundle containing the cream cheese to a customer. "I know not what we are coming to, yes.

"Me, I min' my own business. It is good, yas, but madame, as for me I cannot say what are we coming to. Zey inten' to change zis market an' make it all so—how you call it—sanitary, and put marble an' all like dat here. Me, I can no see de use of it, no madame. I sins we reesk Providence when we do zees. Was not zees market good enough for my mothair? Was it not, I ask you, good enough for her mothair before her? Wasn't it good enough for all those who lived before us, I ask you that, madame?

"Why now should we change? It was good enough for our parents an' madame, it ees good enough for me, oui, madame, it ees. But, me I am a poor woman, we are all poor peoples an' what, I ask you, can we do?"

The workmen have begun their task. Almost before this is printed the French market, the old French market, beloved of drinkers of good coffee and epicures, will appear in a new suit and another landmark will have vanished.

PENSIONS FOR NATION'S WIDOWED MOTHERS

Mrs. Henrietta C. Cosgrove

WITHIN the last few days a number of conferences have been held in this city and State concerning the establishment of the mother's pension system, and the Legislature at Albany next winter will be asked to put the plan in operation.

It costs New York taxpayers $11.91 a month and upward for the maintenance of every child taken from its home and put in an institution. Under the mother's pension plan, which the Illinois Legislature by unanimous vote has established in that State, it costs only $5.75 a month a child to keep these children in their own homes.

It cost $1,089,669 last year to maintain the 8,848 city charges, including orphans. Under the mother's pension plan this sum, it is claimed, could almost be cut in half and homes could be kept together, the children, instead of being farmed into the country or sent to orphan asylums and similar institutions, remaining under their parent's charge, and the domestic conditions of the poor mothers of the city and their children very greatly improved.

The probabilities at the present time seem to be favorable to the passage of the mother's pension bill by the next Legislature and if this takes place the credit will largely be due to a hustling little woman out in Joplin, Mo., Mrs. Henrietta C. Cosgrove, who originated the scheme for pensions for the nation's widowed mothers a few years ago and who by persistent effort has elaborated the plan into a great national movement.

"It is better to provide for pensions for mothers who have been left without support than it is to build homes in which to put the children that the mothers are not able to support," says Mrs. Cosgrove, and upon this theory she has been constantly working.

When Mrs. Cosgrove originated this thought it met with scant response. But she believes in working out of the rut, and in her opinion because a thing has always been is no reason for its continuance but rather a cause for its improvement or alteration to suit the advancement of the times.

Consequently opposition was the only spur she needed to begin work to prove the usefulness of her mother's pensions idea. That she has succeeded is to-day indicated by the fact that within the short space of two years her plan has been presented to the Legislatures of several States, has become a law in Illinois, measurably in Missouri and is being favorably considered in several others, including New York.

Gov. Foss of Massachusetts has recently signed a bill creating a commission to investigate the desirability of a widowed mother's pension measure. Mrs. Cosgrove believes it probable that within five years every State in the Union will have acted favorably on mothers' pensions and that a new world of hope and usefulness will have been revealed to thousands of poor mothers of the nation whose outlook would otherwise have been dark and hopeless.

In return all Mrs. Cosgrove asks is that there be placed upon her tombstone beneath her name the inscription: "First Advocate of Pensions for Indigent Widowed Mothers."

Mrs. Cosgrove's distinguishing characteristic, so all those who know her say, is the ability to combine the practical with the ideal. She is a suffragist and a business woman of wide experience, yet she does not go in for woman's clubs and cares little for society, but she has an absorbing love for the mothers of the nation.

She lives in the far famed lead and zinc district of southeast Missouri and is a large owner of mining land and interested in mines.

"I am rather inclined to socialism in my political views," she says.

For several years she has been a member of the Southern Conference of Woman and Child Labor, and holds the office of State vice-president for Missouri. Meetings of this conference are held annually in one or the other of the large cities of the South.

It was in connection with her work in the conference that Mrs. Cosgrove first conceived the idea of a living pension from the State to be paid direct to the mothers of child workers.

In reference to this Mrs. Cosgrove remarked:

"In my opinion the chief fault in present child labor legislation is that it is not broad enough in the consideration of conditions obtaining among the class most affected by its stringent requirements.

"The modification of one evil condition therefore often results in the creation of another and a greater one.

"Families suffering together are better than scattered and suffering apart. No public institution can take the place of the home. It does not seem to be necessary to accept either horn of this dilemma.

"A better and less expensive solution, both æsthetically and financially considered, can be found in a system of pensions to indigent widowed mothers.

"There are many families whose only refuge from starvation is the assistance rendered by the labor of children often under the ages prescribed by the law. These children are always underpaid and overworked, but the pittance they bring in helps to keep the wolf just outside the shack.

"The widowed mother in these days cannot by her labor alone maintain a family of children, and when they are unable to work they are generally placed in public institutions, children's homes or poorhouses.

"Families are thus torn apart, children deprived of mothers' care and the advantages of home influence and training, with a resulting injury to the State from the certain degeneracy of a large body of the citizens of the future.

"So far as New York is concerned, we want to put a stop to the custom of sending car loads of children from the city to be farmed out in the country. Many of these children are simply exploited for gain. The taxpayers of New York pay $20 to every finder of a 'home' for this class of children. Ninety per cent. of the boys who fall into the hands of strangers who exploit them turn out, when they grow up, to be wife deserters. They lost in childhood all love for home because they were taken from their own home and put at the mercy of strangers.

"In New York and forty other States there is a law devised by Hastings H. Hart, now head of the Russell Sage Foundation, which lets the authorities forcibly take from his home a child whose parents are not able to support him.

"Such a fate overtakes many of those whose parents apply to the charitable societies for aid.

"I have visited hundreds of institutions where children are reared in thousand lots and I have yet to find the first child who does not long for home with his mother."

Mrs. Cosgrove began her work for widows' pensions with great enthusiasm and has since continued in the same spirit. When she first presented her measure to the child conference it was objected to as being "socialistic." Good work will tell, however, and at the conference at Memphis in 1910 so thoroughly had Mrs. Cosgrove won the members over that they adopted unanimously a resolution favoring the enactment by all the States of laws providing reasonable pensions for indigent widowed mothers, with a fixed sum monthly for each child until such children have attained the legal age of employment.

A victory indeed for the energetic little woman from Joplin, Mo.

A few weeks after this indorsement of Mrs. Cosgrove's measure George Sehon of Louisville secured favorable action on the measure by the Missouri Society of Charity and Correction. The publication of this success spread like wildfire and resulted in the adoption by both Missouri and Illinois of laws which have already brought relief to hundreds of families and demonstrated that the pensioning of widows and orphans is less expensive than the old method of the maintenance of children's homes and poorhouses.

Illinois is the only State so far in which the law is effective in the whole State. The mothers' pension roll in that Commonwealth for April was $3,548.72 and is growing at the rate of $500 a month.

In Missouri the law is called the widow's allowance law. It was passed April 11, 1911. This law, which is carrying many mothers out of the darkness of despair into the realm of hope and happiness, applies only to counties having a population of not less than 250,000 and not more than 500,000.

Speaking about it recently E. L. Mathias, chief probation officer of Kansas City, remarked:

"It is the most advanced piece of legislation since the passage of the first juvenile court law in Illinois. So successful has it been that its provisions will be very shortly widened to cover the whole State.

"Mothers have been restored to their children by it and children are being redeemed from neglect and delinquency and are being trained for good citizens. Homes are being reestablished and built up and a splendid atmosphere of domestic good has been created.

"The law has an economical provision as well. The cost averages about $44 a year for each child, whereas the care of these children in public institutions would cost from $15 to $20 a month for each child. In both Missouri and Illinois the law is under the administration of the judges of the juvenile courts."

A CAMPAIGN NOVELTY

Campaign badges and buttons are anciently familiar. A campaign novelty this year—in fact they are already in market—will be found in campaign pipes and campaign cigar and cigarette holders.

The campaign pipe is one of a familiar imported type, having a composition bowl with a cover, a wood stem and a hard rubber bit. This pipe is produced in a variety of sizes and shapes of bowl and with bowls variously colored and ornamented. To the front of the pipe bowl there is affixed a tiny photograph of a Presidential candidate as it would appear on a campaign button; the smoker of a campaign pipe always carries his candidate to the fore.

There are already out campaign pipes bearing the portraits of President Taft and of Dr. Wilson; the manufacturer stands ready to put out Roosevelt pipes if the Colonel should become a candidate. It is not expensive, the campaign pipe; it retails for a dime.

The campaign cigar and cigarette holders are of weichsel, each adorned with the picture of a candidate. These holders are made to sell for a nickel apiece.

These campaign pipes and holders are designed for campaign club use and for sale by cigar stores and by street venders.